

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
THE REVEREND EDWARD HOBBY

JULY 2, 1985

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY PAM SMOOT

ORAL HISTORY #1985-2

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #4076-4079

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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Pam Smoot and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2001. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

## **RESTRICTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Reverend Edward Hobby worked for the Trumans from 1953 until Bess W. Truman's death in 1982. Hobby describes his job as the "handyman" who managed the cleaning of the home and grounds, prepared meals, and undertook various repair projects. During a tour of the house and grounds, Hobby discusses the earlier location of furniture and other Truman artifacts. Hobby also describes the changes that occurred as Mrs. Truman's health declined and the condition of the home by the time of Mrs. Truman's death.

Persons mentioned: Geraldine Peterson, Leola Estes, Arletta Brown, Vietta Garr, Mary Leutzinger, Bess W. Truman, Harry S Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, E. Clifton Daniel, Jr., Madge Gates Wallace, George Porterfield Wallace, Doris Miller, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, May Wallace, Valeria LaMere, Robert E. Lockwood, Thomas B. Saulter, Bob Saunders, Mike Bradley, and Frank Gates Wallace.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
THE REVEREND EDWARD HOBBY**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1985-2

MICHAEL SHAVER: This is a copy of a recorded interview between Miss Pam Smoot, a seasonal historian with the regional office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, and Reverend Edward Hobby of Independence, Missouri, on July 2, 1985. Reverend Hobby was a former handyman and groundskeeper for the Trumans at their home at 219 North Delaware in Independence, where this interview was conducted.

PAMELA SMOOT: We are now in the basement of the Truman home.

REVEREND HOBBY: . . . get me through the year one. These fruit jars, yeah, we'd just throw that stuff away. Them things, they's no good. I'm afraid they're all dried up. [interruption]

LISA BOSSO: Nice to meet you, Reverend Hobby. I have to go back outside and give some more tours.

HOBBY: Okay.

BOSSO: Take care.

HOBBY: Do you bring them down here, too?

BOSSO: No. [chuckling] Every once in a while the floor creaks, and we're like, "Well, I hope we don't have to give any tours of the basement and have them falling through the basement."

HOBBY: Oh, my, and those steps going upstairs! Do they go upstairs?

BOSSO: No, just on the first floor.

HOBBY: I knew that was in her will that Margaret was supposed to have retained a room here

as long as she lived, and come here anytime.

BOSSO: Right. Right. But you could hear those floors squeaking, huh?

HOBBY: Yeah, ever since I worked here. I called it *the screaming*. [chuckling] Yes, indeed, this is a . . .

SMOOT: Did any one certain person use this bathroom here?

HOBBY: Oh, the help. This was our employees' bathroom. We all used the same bathroom, the ladies and the men. We didn't have but the one. They didn't have but one on the first floor, and that was the guest bathroom, and then the other one was on the second floor.

BOSSO: Excuse me, real quick. We have to keep this door locked, okay?

HOBBY: Yes, they put that on there when Mr. . . . The security people took . . . This candle here, someone sent that to Mrs. Truman for a gift. They used it upstairs for a while, and then finally said to bring it downstairs here. So that's where it's been ever since.

SMOOT: So who were some of the other people who worked here in the house?

HOBBY: Well, Miss Peterson, Miss Estes, Arletta Brown, Miss Garr, Vietta Garr. Those are all I remember. Another lady came here. She was a nurse there with Mrs. Truman. Her name was Peaches, but they were nurses. They weren't connected with us. They were the nursing staff.

SMOOT: Has this basement always looked like this?

HOBBY: [chuckling] Well, it looks kind of shabby right now, a lot of stuff in here. They've made some changes, because the washer used to be . . . The washer and the dryer used to be right where they've got that combination sink. And we had a deep freeze right here [pointing to the south]. It's gone, I see. This table is the same. It's been here. And I see they've put in new electrical boxes. Of course, they said they had rewired the house because the wiring had gotten pretty bad. So I see they have put in a new wiring

system. And the lumber back there [pointing to the rear of the basement, west area], that's the same. That was for the fireplaces. All those empty cases . . . I was supposed to have gotten this stuff and disposed of it. In fact, Mrs. Truman told me to take the bottles and I could sell them, and whatever the money was I could take and use it for my church, but I never did do it.

SMOOT: Do you know how often they used the fireplaces? I'm sure they just used them during the winter. Did they use them frequently?

HOBBY: No. In later years they didn't use it at all. They just used the furnace. And they had an electric heater of some type they put in the library. They stayed mostly in the library. They didn't use the living room much. That's where the fireplace is, in the living room, and one in the music parlor. Other than that, there was no other place.

SMOOT: Why don't we take a walk back here and see if you remember anything? We are now walking to the rear of the basement.

HOBBY: All these cases of pop were sent at different times. People would send Mrs. Truman pop. They just drank them when the children and grandchildren would be coming, and they sent them. Yeah, this is all about the same. I don't see no difference. That old suit, that tux suit of Mr. Truman, I was supposed to dispose of that.

SMOOT: This was a tuxedo? [chuckling]

HOBBY: Yes.

SMOOT: I wonder how long it's been hanging there.

HOBBY: Oh, a long time. That's one of the . . . I think her grandson's sled there. And these barrels and things, they were here. They're still the same. All this here, vases and things, that was really my stuff but I never did take it.

SMOOT: So did you have any responsibilities down here in the basement?

HOBBY: Sure, I cleaned the whole place. I would sweep up all of it. Margaret used to have a

buggy over in here, too. Oh, that's that other chaise chair. I was telling her [Bosso] about that. That went out on the porch every summer. I was telling her. She said she hadn't seen it, but there it is right there. That table went out [pointing to the table in the basement, room on the far south side] . . .

SMOOT: This was part of the porch furniture?

HOBBY: Yes, that's part of the porch furniture. That table went on the porch. They ate off of that table. That's where they had their evening meals and breakfasts during the summer months, was off of that table. I washed and painted it many a time.

SMOOT: Was there ever anything right here in this area [pointing to a hole along the right side of the wall in the far basement area], or is that just a hole?

HOBBY: No, I don't think so. There's a lot of old empty bottles and things they used to get. You know, people would send them wine and old baskets. I've forgot what that is [pointing to two bottles—wicker on a chest], some kind of buffet or breakfront, but it's been like that through the years. They never did use it. This is all about the same. I don't see no changes. I'll tell her [Bosso], because that table always went up on the . . . It always sat at this end on the porch [pointing to ceiling, using his arms to show where the table was located], and we had . . . I don't believe I even see those chairs that we used at the . . .

SMOOT: Are those some of the chairs back there?

HOBBY: Those chairs, they didn't use them in later years. They used these here [pointing to chairs against the wall—rear wall separating parts of the basement]. She [Bosso] said some of the chairs they have sent to the library. These other chairs, they didn't use none of them in later years.

SMOOT: When you say *later years*, are you talking about the time when they came back from Washington, D.C.?

HOBBY: Yes. Some of the chairs and things were just . . . Going to have a special guest or something and have extras, then I used a chair like . . . One was sitting in . . . like this here, them or those. But those wooden ones back there, we didn't use them. I'm trying to see where those . . . This chair and that chair were Mr. and Mrs. Truman's chairs. They sat out on the porch. They were the two chairs that they generally sat in. And then they had the chaise lounge chair that's in there, sometimes they'd sit on that. Let's see . . . Oh, yeah, here's one. These were the chairs that they used at the table.

SMOOT: Which table?

HOBBY: Where they ate, where they used to eat their meals. They had two of those upstairs.

SMOOT: Were these chairs in the kitchen?

HOBBY: No, they stayed out on the porch. That's what I'm telling you, around that table that's back here. The kitchen furniture, I guess, is still up there.

SMOOT: Why don't we go see?

HOBBY: I haven't been upstairs and I can't verify it, but everything down here is just like it was when I was here. Only all this pop and stuff is probably . . . They ought to throw it out, because it ain't no [good].

SMOOT: Yeah, there's no telling how long it's been here. I'm sure it's flat. [chuckling]

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, it's flat. [chuckling] She said they're going to keep it, but I don't know what they want to keep it for because it's deteriorated, it's old. That pop, you know, that would be no good. Who would want to drink that?

SMOOT: And it's Choc-Ola. [chuckling]

HOBBY: Some of that [winking], it had a lot of little particles in there. Do you see it? Look at that.

SMOOT: Ooh! Why don't you shake it up? It probably won't even fizz, huh?

HOBBY: All that should be just thrown away. See it? Look at that.

SMOOT: Mm-hmm. If you drink that pop you might get cancer. [chuckling]

HOBBY: More than cancer! I wouldn't have it. They couldn't give it to me to drink. [tape turned off] . . . on the porch, it's still back there. And the table too that they used on the porch to eat at, it's back there.

BOSSO: Yeah?

HOBBY: Yes, indeed. And they boarded this window up [the one above the sink in the basement]. We used to see out to the street from here, because I kept that shrubbery and stuff cleaned out. If the maid was doing the laundry, they could see out. All this here had begun to deteriorate. That began to start to falling out, so I guess they're going to put some new in. [chuckling] It had gotten bad. I think water kind of got to it from the ceiling. Are you jacking up? They're going to put some new braces in?

BOSSO: I don't know what they're going to do.

SMOOT: Watch your step, Reverend Hobby.

HOBBY: Okay, this is about the way when I left. [chuckling] I've made many a trip up and down these stairs.

SMOOT: I'll bet you have.

HOBBY: Yeah, we used to keep them here. There used to be some vases of flowers and things along here.

SMOOT: Along here [pointing to a ledge on stairway leading from the basement to the kitchen]?

HOBBY: Yeah. All this is the same as it was when I . . . It's just unbelievable.

SMOOT: We are now in the Truman kitchen.

HOBBY: Yes, this is the table they ate off of. They had air conditioning in the kitchen.

SMOOT: They had air conditioning in the kitchen?

HOBBY: It was here when I was here. They put that in. This is the stove, the heater that they

heated in the kitchen, because it would be kind of cold back here. That's where they sat [pointing to the kitchen table] and ate their breakfast all the time. That deal underneath there [underneath the kitchen table] is sort of a flour storage thing. It's old, and they didn't use it for anything in the later years. But I think they said during Mrs. Truman's mother's time they kept flour or meal and stuff in there. This is the same. Here's the laundry bag and the sweeper. This is the one they kept the napkins and things in.

SMOOT: Do you want to take a stroll up these stairs?

HOBBY: Do you want to go up there? Can we go up there?

SMOOT: Yes. We're privileged. You go first. We're on our way up to the storage attic [room above the kitchen].

HOBBY: Everything is the same up here.

SMOOT: What room of the house did they call this?

HOBBY: This was just kind of a storeroom. She kept different things . . . What you see in here, these were things that were sent to them as gifts. And this is the chair when she got sick. This is her hospital chair. She kept papers and her stationery stuff on those shelves there. This is the air conditioner that goes in the dining room, I mean the family room. This chair used to be in the parlor. I think they're going to have it reconditioned and put it back in the parlor. I think that's what Miss Margaret said they wanted. These are flowers that were sent her from different times, bouquets. This stuff here is not old. This has been in recent years. That looks modern, but this chair is a historical thing. And the sweeper . . . They sent fruit, baskets of fruit and stuff, and like that. I don't think we can get through there [from the storeroom to Mr. Truman's dressing room].

SMOOT: Well, we can try. If not, we'll go back down.

HOBBY: These screens have deteriorated now. I'll go the other way. I'll have to get through [unintelligible].

SMOOT: We are now in an upstairs bedroom.

HOBBY: This is where we kept the . . . This was the bag, or the luggage, that [unintelligible]. This was Mr. Truman's dressing room. You see some of the stuff is ties and things.

SMOOT: So has this room changed at all?

HOBBY: The only change is in that, their bath there, that was the same thing [pointing to the blue bathroom]. See, this was Mrs. Truman's dressing room here. This was her dressing room. That's a real big attic up there [pointing up the stairs]. This is the bedroom. It hasn't changed either. The TV and everything is still [trails off].

SMOOT: Whose room was this?

HOBBY: This was Mr. and Mrs. Truman's room. And there was a little hallway there. That's the cedar chest that stayed in that hall area there.

SMOOT: Has the room been rearranged, or do you know if it always looked like this, basically?

HOBBY: Well, in the summertime I rearranged it. The beds usually were here [facing the head of the bed toward the stairway]. In the winter we put them that way. So it hasn't been changed now for the summer because I guess nobody uses it.

SMOOT: What about this room here [pointing to Margaret's room]?

HOBBY: This is Miss Margaret's room here. This is her room. This is Margaret's room. This is where she stayed when she always came here. This was her room right here. They had a fireplace there. That TV is still there. I remember using it.

SMOOT: Did they ever use this fireplace?

HOBBY: Not in recent years. As I say, they just used the furnace. This was a beautiful chest. It's very old, but I don't remember . . . It was here when I came here. Somebody sent it to them. It's hand-carved. And this TV used to be downstairs. They got a

new one and put this one up here. All the furniture is the same in here as it was when Margaret come home. This is the way it was.

SMOOT: What was this little room for?

HOBBY: This was just a little storage area. I think everything is about the same in here, too. That cedar chest thing is all still there. The file cabinet is still the same.

SMOOT: Whose file cabinet was that? Did Mr. Truman store his materials in there?

HOBBY: Mr. Truman kept papers and things in there. And this was a guest room, when they had guests [the north bedroom]. Sometimes all of them come. I think Mr. Daniel used to use this room, and one of the boys would be in the room over there. Another one would be in Mrs. Truman's dressing room. Sometimes a nurse would come with the boys, so they stayed downstairs in the guest bedroom. This desk here goes right out here in the hall. It stood right over there. That's where it was. I guess they moved it.

SMOOT: Right there along the banister?

HOBBY: They've moved it out for . . . I guess for their decorating and things. Now, this here antique seat was right against this wall on this side out in the hall. Mrs. Truman did her writing a lot of the time when she was upstairs here. She'd sit there and do her writing at that table right there.

SMOOT: What about this sofa? Was it just always a part of this room?

HOBBY: That's what I said. It goes right here on this wall. That's where it was, right here on this wall. That's where it was, right here.

SMOOT: Do you feel like making another climb?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah. [sound of footsteps climbing stairs]

SMOOT: We are now in the attic. Was this the attic?

HOBBY: That's Christmas decorations [at the top of the stairs to the attic]. That was another

thing, that was mine, too. Mrs. Truman gave me that, and I never did take it. I made a big mistake. I did not take it. That was a Christmas decoration somebody sent. I opened these here vents here for the air to get in, opened these louvers up here. Well, they've been working on this ceiling too, because all this was dropping down up here, and I see they are working on it.

SMOOT: Do you know what this thing is here [pointing to the attic fan]?

HOBBY: That's the vent. That's what I'm saying. I raised these in the summer and opened those shutters there, and they could get air through the downstairs. Well, if you opened these windows, you got a good breeze through there.

SMOOT: This is amazing. I've never seen anything like this before.

HOBBY: Well, it's just like you had the attic fan on. That's a fan in there [opening the vents]. See that fan in there?

SMOOT: Oh, I see.

HOBBY: The control is right down at the first step by the light. You turn that on, and if these windows were open, it cooled right out. In the summertime it was real cool in the . . . All of this is the same. That's an old sewing machine. I think it was Mrs. Wallace's or somebody's. Everything's the same up here. A lot of that stuff over there was stuff that was sent them. They never did go through it and unpack it, so it's just been there through the years.

SMOOT: Did they ever have any bird problems up here?

HOBBY: Oh, yes, we used to have them up here. We used to have those starlings. They'd get in here. I don't know how they'd get in here, but they would.

SMOOT: What did you call them?

HOBBY: Starlings. They're a bird. You call them starlings. This is Margaret's bed when she was a baby. Here's her buggy. Well, see, the birds have been up in here now

[pointing to debris near the window]. Peaches and something. All this stuff is antique, a lot of it.

SMOOT: I'm sure you carried a lot of materials up here just to leave.

HOBBY: Yeah, I'd open all those windows and get good fresh air in. That's trunks. Those are trunks, I think. Some of them was Margaret's. This stuff is old, old, old. That was old antique stuff. This here was an attachment that went on the piano. I asked Mrs. Truman once about it, if they wanted to dispose of it. But it went onto the piano and it gave you kind of an organ effect, and they never did . . . Someone gave it to them as a gift.

SMOOT: They sure received a lot of gifts.

HOBBY: Oh, lord, yes. I think they gave a lot to the library. I'm sure they have.

SMOOT: Have you been over to the library?

HOBBY: No, not since [Mrs. Truman's funeral].

SMOOT: There's Margaret right there [pointing to posters in a container].

HOBBY: That's probably when she was in a recital or something. A piano solo [unintelligible]. It doesn't have a date, does it?

SMOOT: It sure doesn't.

HOBBY: Why didn't somebody put the date on it? How do people know when to come? This closet, that was a closet over there where Mr. Truman kept all his Army things in there. I guess they're still in there [pointing to garment bags in the closet; starts to fan himself].

SMOOT: Phew, it's hot up here. Okay, we can go down. I'm about to burn up.

HOBBY: This used to be downstairs. It was in the dressing room.

SMOOT: Where?

HOBBY: That was a dressing table mirror in one of the dressing rooms.

SMOOT: You don't remember which one?

HOBBY: [unintelligible]

SMOOT: Watch your step.

HOBBY: I've been up and down these steps so many times. Now, see, this comes off [doors on attic fan]. Open these back and turn that thing on there. This is called an attic fan, and that pulled the cool air in and took the hot air out. It gave good ventilation. They didn't have no air conditioning up here. They just used that in the summertime. This is your time thing, you just set it where you want it, right there. If you turn that on and don't take them doors off, they'd tear that thing up.

SMOOT: Let's walk back this way, Reverend Hobby [to Mrs. Truman's dressing room].

HOBBY: Here are some of Mrs. Truman's closets. I guess some of her clothes are still hanging in there, it looks like.

SMOOT: Was this room always arranged like this? Was it like this while you were here?

HOBBY: There ain't no other way to arrange it. [chuckling]

SMOOT: You've got a point there.

HOBBY: There's no other way it could be turned. Yeah, this is the way it's always been. I guess they're going to put in new windows, because [unintelligible]. That cedar chest, that's the same. That's hand-carved, too. This has been here through the years, too. There's one in practically every room. [tape turned off] It was when he passed, and I often wondered why. You know, it seems like it would bring so many memories, but she just . . . She said she was going to get in there and do that. She didn't, so that's the way it was left. [returning to Mr. Truman's dressing room] Of course, the roof was leaking, and they may have moved that sofa out so that the repairs can be done.

SMOOT: In which room?

HOBBY: There in the bedroom. Where that antique set is.

SMOOT: So the roof was leaking right over here in this area?

HOBBY: It kind of leaked. You can see where the water was. [tape turned off] [opening linen closet] This is where they always kept the linens for the beds, and they had it marked for the twin and double beds. So we would know where they were. I made the beds, too.

SMOOT: You made the beds, too?

HOBBY: Yeah, many times. When the maid didn't show up, I did it. I was called a handyman because I did a little of everything.

SMOOT: So you worked both inside and outside the house?

HOBBY: Oh, yes.

SMOOT: So what other type of things did you do around the inside of the house?

HOBBY: I cleaned, general cleaning, washed the walls, woodwork, windows, run the sweeper, dust, just whatever you do in general cleaning. I did the weekly cleaning up here, and the downstairs, too. I ran the sweeper and did the dusting, ordered the flowers. That was all part of what I did. I helped fix their meals. I cooked and prepared the Christmas dinners.

SMOOT: You cooked, too?

HOBBY: Yeah, I served Mr. Truman and Mrs. Truman dinner for holidays. Miss Wallace would come up and have dinner with them on Thanksgiving or at Christmastime holiday.

SMOOT: Did she usually just come on the holidays only, or were there other times that she used to come over and have dinner?

HOBBY: Yeah, other times when Mrs. Truman called and asked her to come, she'd come. Yes.

SMOOT: And when they had dinner, which room? Did they have dinner in the dining room or

the kitchen or the porch?

HOBBY: Most of the time in the dining room, in the evening, or she did. If it were just she and Mr. Truman, they used out there on the back porch because it's screened in and they had a fan out there. It was comfortable. She had her lunch out there, too. Mrs. Truman didn't eat much lunch. Their biggest meal was the evening. Breakfast time they didn't eat a whole lot, so . . . [tape turned off]

SMOOT: We are now in the living room of the Truman house. Is this the living room?

HOBBY: Yes. Everything is the same in here, except you've got an air conditioning unit. I guess this is . . . They've got an air conditioner, but the chairs and tables and clock . . . Mrs. Truman's brother made that clock, Mr. George Wallace. This is all the same. The bookcase and everything, the chairs. This was Mrs. Truman's chair. She sat here most of the time and did her reading. And Mr. Truman would sit there [pointing to the chair close to the fireplace]. The marble-topped tables. Everything is all just the same. However, I think these are all different plants from when I was here. I think these are. I used to have a lot of flowers all in here, and did all the watering of them. This was the fireplace here.

SMOOT: Did they ever use this fireplace?

HOBBY: Oh, years back they used to use it at Christmas time, when they'd put their Christmas tree up.

SMOOT: They'd put the Christmas tree—where did it usually stand in this room? Or did it stand in this room?

HOBBY: Yeah, it was here, I think.

SMOOT: It was here in this corner?

HOBBY: About in here, I think. That table, that's the same thing. I polished all this silver through the years. Those metal irons, I'd polish them. This was a guest room. This is

the chair [orange reclining chair in the guest room] they bought when Mrs. Truman got sick. This chair originally wasn't in here. They just had a smaller chair, but this was a reclining chair and it was used so she could use it and be comfortable.

SMOOT: Which room was it in before they moved it down here when she got sick? Which room was this chair in before, do you remember?

HOBBY: It wasn't here at all. That's what I'm saying. They bought it when she got ill and moved her down here. Before she got where she couldn't go up and down the stairs, she slept upstairs. But when she took sick, then they moved her down here in the guest room, and that's where she stayed until she died. And they bought this chair and put it in here. Her companion, the housekeeper, the lady that was here, they bought that for her.

SMOOT: Do you know what her name was?

HOBBY: [thinking] Not right now. What I was trying to tell you a while ago, before they bought this dresser [downstairs bedroom], that little dressing table what I showed you in the attic—that's where it went, right there. But after Mrs. Truman moved downstairs, I think Margaret bought this and moved all her apparels down here.

[End #4076; Begin #4077]

SHAVER: This is the second reel of a copied interview between historian Pam Smoot of the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, and Reverend Edward Hobby, a groundskeeper and employee of the Truman family. The tour and the reel resumes in the first-floor bedroom commonly known as the Gates bedroom. This interview was conducted on July 2, 1985, at the Truman home.

HOBBY: That's the bed she was in.

SMOOT: She slept in this bed here [closest to bathroom]?

HOBBY: This bed right here. They took that air conditioner that used to be in that window out

of here, because there used to be an air conditioner here, so I guess that's the one they put in the dining area. It was right here, in this window. [in the bedroom] The bathroom is the same, the guest bath. See how the water got there? That leak, but this here is all the same. It's still the same. These buckets are mine, and that little telephone stand, that used to be in the pantry near the kitchen, I'll show you, but this here was bought . . . This was not always here [referring to the dresser in the bedroom].

SMOOT: It really looks nice.

HOBBY: They kept the linen room here. That's where they kept the linen. And they put that stand in here for the telephone when Mrs. Truman was in here and the nurse stayed in here, too. The nurse used this chair a lot of times at night. [chuckling] Oh, what is that woman's name? She lived right here in Independence, too. [tape turned off] Miss [Doris] Miller, her beauty operator, might tell you some things, too, because she has a beauty shop over here. She did Mrs. Truman's hair for many years. Then when Mrs. Truman got to where she couldn't go to the beauty shop, she came here and did it.

SMOOT: Impressive.

HOBBY: When she'd sit in the living room here, this door would be open a lot of times. Tourists would come down the driveway to try to see her, but they couldn't see. [chuckling] It was really funny to see these tourists coming and wanting to try to see her. She'd sit out on the porch and they'd try to get where they could see her, but they couldn't. They didn't like a lot of publicity. A lot of times they'd want to take pictures, and they wouldn't let them take pictures of them. They were very quiet. Sometimes I'd come here and get them to autograph something for somebody who would be outside. They'd want an autograph. I did that a lot of times. [chuckling]

[tape turned off]

[in foyer area] They've been here all the time, this light fixture. That's Margaret's picture. That's been there all the time. That table's been there all the time. This is the same as . . . [in the music room] All this has been the same as it was then. It's the same place it was when I was here. It's in the same place. These are new curtains here. Mrs. Truman had them made in later years, because the original curtains in here had worn out. She had new ones made. But those are new. These are all new curtains. All these pictures [on the piano]—I used to clean them, washed and shined them up in here. The bookcase is the same, and this loveseat is the same. When the Secret Service was here, they began to put their feet up on the edge and kind of began to break it. We had to put a sign on it: "Please . . ."—you can see those little lines where it's worn. It's very old. It's worn. And they were beginning . . . So we put a sign up there telling them please don't rest their feet on that. This is all the same. That's the last TV they bought.

SMOOT: This is what?

HOBBY: This is the last TV that was bought. The one before is upstairs in Margaret's room. This was the last one they bought, here in the living room [in the music room]. That's where Mr. and Mrs. Truman always sat, right over there where those two chairs are. She sat on this side and he sat on the other side, and they did their reading. No, I take that back. Mr. Truman sat here in this chair. This was his chair. And Mrs. Truman sat over there. And if sometimes they'd have guests, well, maybe one of them would sit there. But Mrs. Truman always used that little stool sometimes when she was sitting there reading, prop her feet up on that stool. Those are the canes that he used when he'd take a walk. [unintelligible] gave them this picture. All this is the same.

SMOOT: So was this furniture in this library, was it basically the same, too?

HOBBY: Oh, yes, everything is the same. That radio and record player, all that was right there. All the books are the same. Everything. I don't see anything that's . . . [tape turned off] . . . all the records in that chest there, that's all the same. This chair used to sit over here [chair between the piano and loveseat, near the doorway on right, near the piano], and that other chair I was talking about up in the attic, the high back, it used to sit right here. That's the only thing that's missing out of this is that chair, but I guess they're going to have it recovered, refinished. It's upstairs now in the attic, but it sat right here by this—

SMOOT: Right here?

HOBBY: Mm-hmm. That little chair always sat right there.

SMOOT: Were you ever around when any of the celebrities came by to visit?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, a lot of times when the presidents would come, Johnson and Nixon. When Mr. Truman died and the presidents all came here, all of the dignitaries come, more or less. We were getting things ready for them to make their coming, you know, when Mr. Truman died, and they came back here after the funeral, sure. [tape turned off] This is where Mrs. Truman normally sat and talked on the phone when she was up in this part of the house. And this is his coat and that was her coat, and that's his hat and umbrellas. All of this is the same [dining room]. This is all the same. Well, they've redone these, because these had gotten real bad. They've had them resealed. They look really beautiful. This belongs to Miss Margaret. This was hers. That [containers near epergne]—they used to keep flowers there, and they're gone now.

SMOOT: Were they in a vase?

HOBBY: No, cut flowers. That's where those dishes are. I kept them watered, and that's where they've got the furniture. They put another leaf in here [dining room table], I see. All that silver and stuff is the same as when I was here.

SMOOT: What is this [referring to the plate warmer]?

HOBBY: That comes up through there. That's something to keep you warm. That's from the furnace, and that gets warm and it throws out heat. I cleaned this many, many, many times, that chandelier.

SMOOT: The chandelier?

HOBBY: I washed it. It would be sparkling and shining. But look at it now. [chuckling]

SMOOT: That's sort of like the bushes, huh?

HOBBY: All this stuff in here, I'd clean it and wash it and shine it every so often. I polished all this silver here on this buffet. I did all of that.

SMOOT: You had a lot of responsibilities.

HOBBY: I don't think it's been done since I was here. [chuckling] All this, I used to polish every bit of it. All of this, too. That's one of the leaves of the table, and this is where they had the phone, right there. This is it. This is another pantry here where they kept . . . This is a gift that she got on the last Christmas before she passed [referring to plates and photos on the wall of the pantry]. Someone sent that to her. We had it in there on the mantel in the living room. And one of the nurses bought that for her when she was sick, that bird, and it turned around and made music. She used to laugh and get a kick out of that. And these were dishes they had [opening cabinets in the butler's pantry]. All of this, everything is just like it was. [chuckling] Oh, boy, it sure is. And this cabinet had stuff in here. I guess they got all that out, because it would always be those . . . It's gone bad, Crisco. [chuckling]

SMOOT: Here's some Crisco that looks like it's been there about twenty years.

HOBBY: Yes, and sugar and flour and coffee cans and all. Oh, there's the vegetable bin. Yeah, it's just the same. Here's a watering can. That's what I watered my flowers with.

SMOOT: What was this used for [referring to work table in kitchen]?

HOBBY: Oh, the cook used that and worked on it. And this used to be a rack with spices on it . . . all with spices up there. This was bought in recent years. When Mrs. Truman was ill, they [bought] a blender and made milk shakes and stuff in it at times.

SMOOT: They still have the ironing board here.

HOBBY: That ironing board was here, too. In the later years, rather than make a trip down the stairs to the basement, if they were up on this floor, they could iron up here too as well as downstairs.

SMOOT: We are now going back down into the basement. [sound of footsteps descending stairs]

HOBBY: This has deteriorated [referring to the soda pop]. It should be thrown out. I was supposed to get rid of all of that.

BOSSO: You were, huh?

HOBBY: Yeah, and all of those bottles of . . . empty cases, I was supposed to take that and sell it and get rid of it, but I never did get rid of it.

BOSSO: You didn't, huh? There's a lot to get rid of back there, isn't there?

HOBBY: Yeah, I mean right there, all that pop has been here since Hector was a pup. [chuckling] You know, the reason it accumulated, every year at the holidays when Margaret would come with the boys, some of their friends . . . There was a man who used to send all that pop, and he's dead now too, Mr. Hipps. He used to send pop by the cases all the time. We drank it, too. You could never drink all that pop. I wonder what they did with the deep freeze?

BOSSO: We put it in the Truman Library. We have a big storage room up there. We moved the deep freeze and the old stove and washer and dryer.

HOBBY: Yeah, and the old refrigerator?

BOSSO: Mm-hmm.

HOBBY: Are they going to leave it there at the museum?

BOSSO: Mm-hmm.

SMOOT: So, Reverend Hobby, did you meet the Trumans from friends or relatives? How did you come to work for the Trumans?

HOBBY: I came to work for one of the employees that worked here. Reverend Scott.

SMOOT: Reverend Scott? What was his first name, do you remember?

HOBBY: [nodding no]

SMOOT: Did Mrs. Truman supervise you, or did you do . . . You did your own work?

HOBBY: Most of the time, yeah, [unless] there was something special she wanted me to do. After they told me and gave me the layout of the work, a lot of times they would be gone or busy, and I could do what I wanted to do.

SMOOT: How often did you work?

HOBBY: Well, that varied. Sometimes I would work two or three days a week, and especially summertime there was more work to be done in the yard.

SMOOT: Did you continue your responsibilities when the Trumans weren't here? Did you continue to maintain the grounds?

HOBBY: Yes. All of the employees continued to work. [unintelligible], the ladies that did the laundry and cleaning.

SMOOT: Where did the employees eat their meals?

HOBBY: Right here.

SMOOT: Right here in the basement?

HOBBY: No, they ate upstairs in the kitchen.

SMOOT: Was there ever anything growing on the grounds called hollyhocks?

HOBBY: Yeah, in way years back. It's gone.

SMOOT: There aren't any out there now?

HOBBY: No.

SMOOT: When they were there, where were they planted? Do you remember?

HOBBY: Oh, there used to be some right there by that grape arbor, and I think some over by the garage there, but that's been years ago.

SMOOT: Did they come in colors? [chuckling]

HOBBY: Yes. Mrs. Wallace did have some down there by her garage where you come in the drive there. I don't know whether they're yet there or not.

SMOOT: What color were they?

[SHAVER: This is the end of the first side of the original ninety-minute cassette.]

SMOOT: Did the Secret Service do anything special to the grounds?

HOBBY: No, just checked those systems that they had, if they'd have some problem with that, if some minor little wires were cut or something and interfered with the screens or the pictures that they had over there and that's all.

SMOOT: When you took care of the grass, did you do anything other than mow the lawn?

HOBBY: You know, the trimming and the shrubbery. Oh, yes, I did it all.

SMOOT: Did you ever use any fertilizer or anything like that?

HOBBY: Yeah, I had to put fertilizer out on it. Seed it, too.

SMOOT: Out there in the rose bed, were they planted in a pattern or did they just . . . Were there a lot of them? Were they bunched up, or were they—

HOBBY: The way you see them out there now the same way.

SMOOT: Did Mrs. Truman have something that she used to do just all the time? Do you know what her daily routine was?

HOBBY: Oh, that varied. In the later years, Mrs. Truman didn't do too much except read. She'd go to the beauty shop on certain days of the week. Sometimes she went twice a week. It would depend. Then before she got in later years, I think she'd go to the

bridge club, a place to go out with them, I guess, sometimes to luncheons. Then after that when she began to decline, she didn't go hardly anywhere.

SMOOT: The furniture in the downstairs bedroom, was it ever upstairs before?

HOBBY: What?

SMOOT: The furniture in the upstairs bedroom on the first floor, the room we went in, where they brought the reclining chair for Mrs. Truman when she was sick, when she got sick, was that furniture always in that bedroom while you were here?

HOBBY: The posts. Did they have posts on the furniture in there now?

SMOOT: The two beds?

HOBBY: Did they have the posts to them? Did the beds have posters on them?

SMOOT: Yeah.

HOBBY: Well, those were the beds that originally had been upstairs in her bedroom. Then when they moved her down here, we moved them downstairs. And the ones that are upstairs were the ones that were in the guest room.

SMOOT: In what room did the Trumans spend most of their time?

HOBBY: In the library.

SMOOT: Did they sit on the back porch often?

HOBBY: Oh, in the summertime, yeah. They'd sit out there in the evenings, in the afternoons. Yeah, between the library and out on the porch. During the wintertime, most of their time was spent in the library.

SMOOT: What kind of meals did they eat for breakfast and lunch?

HOBBY: Oh, they'd have cereal and coffee and toast. They didn't have a whole big heavy breakfast.

SMOOT: Not like the kind I usually eat, I'm sure.

HOBBY: Lunchtime they'd eat very light, or maybe have a sandwich and a salad, something to

drink, some kind of drink, like coffee or tea. Milk, mostly milk, a glass of milk.

SMOOT: Which porch furniture did they sit on during the time that you were here? What kind of furniture was on that back porch?

HOBBY: Just what you see out there. I showed you those chairs back there. Those folding chairs [wooden chairs].

SMOOT: Do you remember when they purchased the white metal furniture?

HOBBY: It was here when I came here.

SMOOT: Do you know what kind of things they did on the back porch?

HOBBY: Oh, they'd sit out there and read, and they'd have guests and visit with them out there a lot of times. When friends or a guest was coming, they'd sit out there and visit with them.

SMOOT: I noticed that they had two TVs, too, that you showed me. Did they ever watch TV?

HOBBY: Oh, yes.

SMOOT: Often?

HOBBY: Watched the news and so forth. If there was some special or Margaret was going to be on TV, Mr. and Mrs. Truman would watch that, too.

SMOOT: When you came to work for the Trumans, did you usually come dressed prepared for work, or did you just change somewhere in the house?

HOBBY: Yes, I wore what I was going to work in.

SMOOT: Was there always an air conditioner in the study, in the library?

HOBBY: Yeah, that's where the air conditioner always was, in the library.

SMOOT: Reverend Hobby, I know you did a lot of things around here, but did you shovel the snow, too? [chuckling]

HOBBY: [chuckling] Just up and down the walk here, not out in the driveway. They always had a man come with one of those snow plows to do that. I kept the back one and

the front walk shoveled, if I was down here. If I wasn't down here, someone else did it. The Secret Service did it in later years after they got the Secret Service people here. They had to come in and out of the front entrance anyway, so they more or less kept it shoveled, too. On days when I'm here and the snow come up, I'd shovel, too.

This table goes out on the back porch. Mrs. Truman put that by her chair. She sat her glasses on there, her milk.

SMOOT: Did they have a lot of leaks in the house? Did it leak in here when it rained?

HOBBY: Oh, in later years it began to kind of [trails off]. They had the roof recovered. But just in the later years.

SMOOT: Do you know who took care of the Truman cars? Did they have a special mechanic or anything, or was there one particular place where they used to take the cars?

HOBBY: Yeah, up here on the . . . There was a Texaco or a Standard station there up on the next street where they virtually always carried their car.

SMOOT: Did they always have the tools that you needed?

HOBBY: Yes. If they didn't, I'd go buy them.

SMOOT: Where did you buy them from?

HOBBY: Midland's Hardware. That's where they bought or purchased them.

SMOOT: Okay, Reverend Hobby, I know it's been a long day, but I need you to do one more thing for me. I'd like to go on the back porch and maybe you can show me where the furniture was. [tape turned off]

HOBBY: No, these are new ones. Those others had rusted out. These are all new flower boxes. I guess they are the same. They were originally made like they were originally, but these are all new, and the liners are new, too. They had rusted out. All these are new liners. [tape off] Those little screens that I was showing you, they go on these doors here. That's what you call a combination storm and screen. I'm surprised they

don't have it shaped up any better than this here [referring to the shrubbery].

SMOOT: So do you remember how the furniture was set up out here?

HOBBY: I could do it blindfolded, I guess. [chuckling] That's where the table went, right over there. And they had a table upstairs in the attic, a round table that went there, and they had a chair on each side of that. And they had . . . there were benches that went in each one of these places there for the flowers, and the flower boxes sat on them. And those two chairs I showed you, one here and one was there, and a lamp stand in the middle with a little cup, that sat right in the middle and a chair was on each side. And the chairs that she [Bosso] said they carried to the library, they were two blue chairs with armrests, and one sat on each side here. And they had a drop-leaf large table that sat right here.

SMOOT: A drop-leaf?

HOBBY: Yes. It had a flower or plant on it. [interview recording interrupted] There was a woman that stayed here till Mrs. Truman . . . She was the housekeeper or whatever you want to call her, Miss Valeria LaMere, and she was here. I worked for her. She worked here about two years or a little better for Mrs. Truman, after Mrs. Truman began to get into failing health. But none of them worked as long as I worked here. None of them.

SMOOT: What happened to them? Where did they go?

HOBBY: Well, I guess when Mrs. Truman died that terminated Valeria's work here. She didn't have nothing else to do here, and so that terminated it. The nurses, they went, I guess, back their various ways because there wasn't nothing else for them to do here. They probably got other jobs nursing other people.

SMOOT: So has the grass always been this high? [chuckling]

HOBBY: Well, it hasn't been mowed, as you see. No, the grass [wasn't like this]. They've kept

the yard looking pretty nice. [unintelligible]

[SHAVER: This is the end of the second side of the first tape.]

[End #4077; Begin #4078]

SHAVER: This is the recording of a cassette tape of an oral history interview conducted by Pam Smoot, seasonal historian with the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service, and Reverend Edward L. Hobby, an employee of the Truman family in Independence, Missouri. This is the second of two cassettes, the first side. The interview was conducted at the Truman home on July 2, 1985.

SMOOT: Mr. Hobby, have the grounds changed much since you've been away?

HOBBY: No, it's about the same. I don't see too much change. The shrubbery and all is about the same as it was when I was here. The trees are all about the same. The front is about the same. I don't see any changes. All these trees or shrubbery, landscaping, it's about all the same as it was. The flag is in the same location it was when I worked here. The markers yet there—that was put in the yard, it's the same spot when they was put here.

SMOOT: Okay, why don't we go inside the gate.

HOBBY: This originally was the . . . I think there was one tree taken out over there. There used to be a tree along in here. That has been taken. And also I see one there has been removed right along in that section. This here, this is the tree I was telling you about, the bush with the berries on it—you can see a few on there now—and that has always been there.

SMOOT: Okay, what kind of bush is that?

HOBBY: I just call it just a berry bush tree. All the rest is spirea, and that's the same as the bushes in the back that I was telling you about. Not spirea but . . . oh, it'll come to me in a minute.

SMOOT: Okay. All right, was there ever a tree over there in that corner? I notice that there is a stump over there.

HOBBY: Yes, there was. That was taken out.

SMOOT: Do you know what kind of tree that was?

HOBBY: It was the same as these trees here. But this tree here was planted in recent years. And there was one there, too, where you see this . . . There used to be three trees here, and you can see part of the stump. Part of a stump is still here. See there? And the one there.

SMOOT: Do you have any idea when these trees were taken out?

HOBBY: Oh, they were before Mrs. Truman and Mr. Truman both passed away. About ten years or more ago.

SMOOT: Were they damaged at all from any types of storms or anything, or were they just taken out for—

HOBBY: Oh, they had died. Yeah, they were dead.

SMOOT: Okay. Has this flagpole always been in the same place?

HOBBY: Yes, [unintelligible].

SMOOT: Do you have any idea what this concrete structure is over here? Do you know what was right here?

HOBBY: No, just some kind of little emblem [?], to my knowledge. I never [unintelligible] during my time of working here. [unintelligible] this piece of concrete there.

SMOOT: Okay. Has the grass always been this high? Did you ever mow the lawn?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, I did it for years. Probably they haven't mowed it lately, but they generally keep it cut down short. These are spireas. That's a forsythia bush.

SMOOT: Oh, forsythia?

HOBBY: Forsythia, that bush in the middle there. All the rest of it is spirea.

SMOOT: Did you plant any of these bushes?

HOBBY: No, they were here when I came here.

SMOOT: When did you first come to work for the Trumans?

HOBBY: Oh, way back in the '40s, in '45 or '46.

SMOOT: What kind of plant is this?

HOBBY: That's a lily bush. That's what I was telling you about. That evergreen was planted some years back too, but that bush there, the lily, it blooms. It has a beautiful white flower on it, and it bloomed every year.

SMOOT: Did you plant that?

HOBBY: No, all this was planted here. That evergreen has grown a little since I left from here. It wasn't quite that tall when I was here.

SMOOT: Did you plant that?

HOBBY: No, all that was planted before. Probably one of the other men prior to my coming had planted those trees. I think someone gave that evergreen to Mr. Truman and they put it there. That's practically the only really tall evergreen they have in the yard. You do find maybe a few little ones somewhere in the back under the acorn tree over there.

SMOOT: Were there ever any trees alongside this . . . ?

HOBBY: Just what you see there, those bushes.

SMOOT: So these were here during the period that you worked here?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, I trimmed them many, many, many times. [chuckling]

SMOOT: How often did you trim them?

HOBBY: Oh, just whenever they needed it. Now these are some lily of the valleys in there. I used to keep all these things, the big roses with thorns on them, we kept them cut out, but they're not doing that now. I notice this is growing up quite thick. But all this used to be cut out, and we kept it so you could see the lilies of the valley in there. They

have changed that. And there was a large tree right here. That tree has been removed from here.

SMOOT: Was it similar to the rest of the trees in the yard?

HOBBY: Yeah. Now those are lilac bushes there. These are lilac bushes all along there. And then there is a spirea. And this used to be a berry tree. We kept all that cut out. She didn't like that in there. And there's a mulberry tree in there. But these bushes there with the rosebushes under them, that was always here. But this here, we kept this cut out. I kept that cut out all the time.

SMOOT: So all of this was not here during the time that you were here, or it was just better kept?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, it was here. It was better kept. It was always here. And that vine, the grapevine, that was here. Of course, they've cut out some of that, because it used to hang way over. I used to have to keep that cut off from over the walk so that people could pass.

SMOOT: Oh, so in other words, it used to hang over the fence?

HOBBY: Yes, [unintelligible].

SMOOT: Have these lilacs always been this tall? These are lilacs, aren't they?

HOBBY: This isn't a lilac, but the ones behind it, those two there. This has a bloom on it, but it's different now. It's a mock orange. This is a mock orange bush here.

SMOOT: And what type of flowers? Do flowers grow on this tree?

HOBBY: Yeah, it's a white flower, a mock orange bloom, and then they die down and then it's just green. Oh, my, they never have done anything to these peonies. I kept them all cut back. [chuckling] It looks like a wilderness down in here now. There used to be a tree over in here they have cut out, too. There was a tree along the fence over there.

SMOOT: Was the tree cut out during the time that you worked for the Trumans?

HOBBY: Yes. A man cut them, Mr. . . . I've forgot the man that took care of the trees. Those are the peonies there, and these are Jonathans. I kept that cut as soon as they got through blooming and all. We kept them cut out. All this here was . . . you could see up to the porch, but you can't see nothing there now. [chuckling]

SMOOT: Okay, there's a brick area right there. Do you have any idea what used to grow in that area?

HOBBY: There was a grape arbor around that used to be in here. A grape arbor used to be right here.

SMOOT: Do you know what this structure is here?

HOBBY: That was a birdbath, and the rest of it . . . No, it was some kind of little instrument. That's the birdbath there. They have taken that off. It used to be some kind of a . . . kind of like a compass deal that someone gave Mrs. Truman [trails off].

SMOOT: Do you remember who gave it to her?

HOBBY: No, I don't remember.

SMOOT: So only grapes grew in this area?

HOBBY: Here they had a grape arbor right back in that area, not all the way through. These are your blooming rose of Sharon bushes I was talking about. All of these, I kept them trimmed, too.

SMOOT: So, in other words, everything out here is overgrown now.

HOBBY: Everything is just overgrown, yeah. We never let it get that tall. Mr. Truman and them always sat there on the porch, and they could see . . . We kept it . . . It was enough to give them privacy, but at the same time it never was up like this.

SMOOT: When you used to trim the bushes, how high were they usually?

HOBBY: Well, I just couldn't tell you.

SMOOT: Just roughly.

HOBBY: It'd be a little taller than I am. It would be tall enough to give them privacy, especially right in this area. That we kept a little lower. All of those are lilac bushes along the fence there. These are spireas here. I would have thought they'd cut all this. Now this is the rose bed. They have planted a lot more roses in there than since I left from here. There used to be a tree in here, too. That's been cut out.

SMOOT: So was that tree removed during the time that you worked for the Trumans?

HOBBY: Oh, yes. The rose of Sharon and some of them have died out too there, I see. And there were spirea bushes outside the fence there, the gate on that side there. All of this, that tree has been there through the years. I'll tell you, apparently they must be putting in a water system. I see where they have been digging here. That's the May Wallace rose along the fence there I was telling you about. That was named after Mrs. . . . All those are new rosebushes. All of the originals, probably they have all died out. [interview interrupted]

SMOOT: Did you ever plant roses back here?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, we planted them all the time. When they'd die out, I'd replant them. Mrs. Truman would go buy them and I'd plant them, whatever she wanted. But as I say, all of those roses . . . See, I've been away from here for . . . oh, ever since after Mrs. Truman passed. I haven't worked here since. But I kept that all cut down too, all them, and you could see the lilies of the valley, but it's just grown up now and everything . . .

SMOOT: Did you ever plant the roses in a particular pattern? Were there more than this, fewer than this, or did you—

HOBBY: Oh, just about the same, about the same amount, so I don't see much change in that. They may have added a few more, but not too many. And this was a grapevine. That's been cut down, too. The grapes used to go up and grow on the wires there.

They had a good flavor, the grapes did. We used to . . . All along here was the grapevine. All this has been cut down. Now, see, they've got the flower boxes fixed again. Every year, in the spring, the florist would come and take those and put the flowers in them. I see they are still doing that.

SMOOT: Do you remember the name of the florist?

HOBBY: Oh, no, not offhand I don't. I guess it would be Walkers. His name was Walker, Walker Florists. He did Mrs. Truman's arrangements for years. Now there is more of the spirea bush—I mean the forsythia bushes.

SMOOT: Why don't we walk over . . . ?

HOBBY: This is a rose of Sharon, too, bush.

SMOOT: Oh, so they come in different colors?

HOBBY: Yeah, they varied the colors. They weren't all one color. And there were some tulips. There used to be a tulip bed right along the house there, too. Let's see if that's still . . . I kept all this shaped. It wasn't nothing like that. [chuckling] It's unbelievable. Now the tulips used to be all along . . . Right along in here we had tulips. There is a spring or a cistern underneath this porch there. That's been there for years. I guess that's a lighting system they've put in there, a plug. Where that screen is, that was Mr. Truman and them's room, and I winterized it. In the spring I got it ready for the summer for her to sit out there if she wanted. Of course, they kept the windows open. That's all screened in. I winterized this porch for them. They'd sit out here in the summer and read. In the winter I'd take all of the porch furniture and store it away. There was nothing left on this.

SMOOT: How did you go about winterizing the porch?

HOBBY: Well, move all the porch furniture off, put it back to the basement. That's where we kept it, in the basement.

SMOOT: Were there ever any trees alongside the garage?

HOBBY: Just what you see. Yes, there was one tree that was over there. I think it's been taken out, too. It's gone now. It was right at the fence there. You'll see the place. I'll show you. That's Mrs. Wallace's car there. That's Mrs. Truman's sister-in-law. And there along the fence there is where the surprise lilies used to be. Now, they'll come up a little later on, but this is the area where the surprise lilies grew. Right along . . . you can see the spot there in the bed there. Now these are some more of those rose of Sharon, and it's mixed with some other . . . This tree has been here all the time, too. There used to be another tree right there. I think it's been taken out. And those elderberry bushes, we kept them cut out. We didn't have them growing up.

SMOOT: Which ones are elderberry bushes?

HOBBY: With those berries on them. They're white, and some of them have already turned. Those are elderberries. I kept all that cut out. She didn't want that in there. And you could see the shutters on the garage a little better, but you can't now because it's all grown . . . It's so tall! It's just so surprising. I thought sure they had shaped it up better than this. Mr. Lockwood, is he still doing this, or do you know?

SMOOT: No, Mr. Lockwood no longer takes care of the grounds.

HOBBY: He does not?

SMOOT: No, he doesn't.

HOBBY: Well, when I left from here, he was taking care of the grounds. That's the cut-off for the water. And they put that spade there because the fellows used to always either run over it with the mower or stumble over it, [chuckling] so we put that old spade there. I see it's still here.

SMOOT: Do you know who put it there, or how long it's been there, just roughly?

HOBBY: Oh, it was here when I came here, so it's been here a long time. [chuckling] There is a

gate there, but that gate never was used very much. There was a big tree there. The tree has been cut out, so it's not there anymore. That's the acorn tree there. Oh, yes, now here's another tree. It has kind of died out. It used to be more . . . This tree here, I've forgot the name of it, and then it had the lilac bushes in between there. And there's some more of that . . . What'd I call the name of it? Spirea? Not spirea. Forsythia bush. All that's forsythia. That's a trumpet vine plant. I kept all that cut out because it would just take over everything and really choke out the shrubbery, and we kept that cut down. And that was a mock orange, that tree right there. All these trumpet vines growing up in there, I kept all that cut out.

SMOOT: So did these bushes here, did they always grow like that?

HOBBY: Yeah, that's been more or less like that, but I kept it trimmed and shaped up. It wasn't like it is now. All these trees here are the same. They were here when I worked here. They've cut some bushes out along there. Those were some more spirea bushes. I guess in painting they had to cut them back, like all of that is now.

SMOOT: What about those little plants growing on the ground, very close to the ground, near the spirea? Do you know what those are?

HOBBY: No, that was just a ground cover. There's some weeds in there, too. [chuckling] This was just . . . well, I've forgotten. It had a little purple flower on it, but it's a ground cover, you know, you could use. I see they're remodeling these steps on this side here, too, those steps here. The windows have deteriorated a lot. I see they're putting in and replacing a lot of the bad lumber that was in there. Yeah, those are the same over there. All along there is spirea. When Mrs. Truman passed and one of the news press was here, they snapped a picture of me cutting the shrubbery. I stopped and talked with them. Oh, the TV station, Channel 4, Action 4, and I think 5 both interviewed me there. I talked with them. They showed that on the press, on the news.

SMOOT: I'm sorry I missed it. I have a picture of you, too. There was a snowstorm or an ice storm or something, and some limbs had fallen off some trees. I managed to pick that picture up from the *Kansas City Star* [see appendix, item 1].

HOBBY: [chuckling] Yeah, well, I was over right in that corner there, and, oh, the street was roped off, you know, they had heavy security, and different ones would stop and ask me about it. You know, how did I know them, or did I ever talk with them? I said, "Well, sure, I talked with them all the time." Were they nice people to work for? "Yeah," I told them, "I never had no problem with them." I knew about just what had to be done. They didn't have to tell me all the time, because I got the gist of it and I'd just go on. So that was another thing they liked. If they had something special they wanted me to do, then she would ask me. But other than that, I knew about the regular routine of everything. There used to be another tree, I think, right along in there, but that's been cut out, too. But that was, oh, quite a few years back. We had that cut out because it had died out and it was taken out. So they just have the forsythia bushes here. It used to be shaped, and I kept it pretty well shaped. Everybody used to always talk about how pretty the yard and the landscaping was.

SMOOT: You wouldn't by chance have any pictures of how you used to keep the lawn, or how it used to look when you were maintaining the grounds, would you?

HOBBY: No, I didn't take any pictures myself. The tourists would take them. [chuckling] Yeah, they took plenty of them of me out here working and trimming the landscaping. I guess the inside of it, I guess the furniture and all is about the same. I don't know.

SMOOT: So has this tree always . . . ?

HOBBY: Yes, it's always been just like it is. Maybe at sometime we had to trim [it]. I see this tree here still has some . . . If we had a storm, it would break the branches off just like that, and it's broke off now. And a lot of times I'd get up and cut them if they were in

my reach. Otherwise if they weren't, then she'd have to have the tree service people to come and cut them down. But some of them I could do it myself.

SMOOT: What was the name of the tree service? Do you remember?

HOBBY: I think his name was Mr. Saulter. I'm not for sure. I don't know whether he's yet doing the tree service. I think his name was Saulter. He's a resident here in Independence. I don't see this Saunders. Mr. Saunders was the one that did the painting and keeping up the outside of the house all the years I worked here, but these look like different . . . I don't see him. I'm going to ask this fellow. [addressing a workman] Say, are you one of Mr. Saunders's sons?

MIKE BRADLEY: No, sir. My name is Mike Bradley.

HOBBY: Well, is Saunders still doing any of the painting around here?

BRADLEY: No, that name doesn't ring a bell.

HOBBY: George Saunders?

BRADLEY: No, we're working with the Campos Construction Company.

HOBBY: Oh, well, you're different altogether. They're some different painters.

BRADLEY: Sorry, I couldn't help you.

HOBBY: Huh?

SMOOT: He said he's sorry he couldn't help you.

HOBBY: Oh, that's okay. They used to do all the trimming and painting here. That's why I thought . . . He did have a son that used to work with him too, and a couple of other fellows.

BRADLEY: Did he use Glidden paint the last time he painted?

HOBBY: I guess he did. [chuckling]

BRADLEY: I know the salesman that sold it to him.

HOBBY: Yeah. Well, it's gotten in pretty bad shape, I know. [chuckling] Yes, sir. It's

going to look real nice, though, when you get it all finished up.

BRADLEY: Thank you.

HOBBY: The lattice under here has deteriorated, a lot of that.

SMOOT: The what?

HOBBY: The lattice around the cover, enclosed under the porch there. I see they are putting in some new, I guess, in there. Right there is all . . . [unintelligible] not even much of a change. [chuckling]

SMOOT: Not much of a change? It's just that the bushes . . .

HOBBY: They're just growing out of hand, that's all I can see. There's no new shrubbery been planted, where I can see. Only the roses there in the rose bed. Everything else is the same. The peonies on each side of the driveway, they're yet there, but they sure are in a bad shape.

SMOOT: What color were the peonies?

HOBBY: They were a deep red. Beautiful, beautiful.

SMOOT: Were all of them deep red?

HOBBY: Well, they had some white and red, and some were pink. They were a mixture. But the west side, they were practically all a deep red. The other side was sort of a variation—some white, some pink, and some red.

SMOOT: When they were planted, were they planted all mixed together, or did you have red over here and white over here and maybe pink over there?

HOBBY: Well, they were here when I came, so I really don't know. But you know sometimes over a period of time flowers can . . . the seeds, you know, can get over and cause others to grow in, so that's probably what has happened. But we always cut them for Memorial Day. Mrs. Wallace mostly took the flowers to the cemetery, and she would cut them. And I'd take some, cut them, and I'd have them. She'd tell me to take

some. I'd take them and decorate my graves, too. [chuckling] She was very nice about that. I see the houses across the street, that one is going down, too. I knew the lady, and I don't know whether she and her son live there now, but they lived in that house there. The people that lived in this house, they moved and sold and went away, too. This home on the corner, that's Mrs. Truman's and them's cousin, Mrs. Haukenberry. That's her name. She lives right there on the corner. Well, there was a rosebush, too, right here at the corner of the porch. I guess that's been cut out. I don't see any trace of it. They called that Mother Wallace's rose. It was a very pretty . . . had a delicate pink bloom. And I see they've put in an all-new walk here. This is all new. This walk was not here.

SMOOT: Exactly where was the bush, the rosebush?

HOBBY: Well, it was down here at the corner of the porch where they have the . . . where they could sit. That was another little evergreen there. That was here when I came, also. These are daylilies. They were here. Now, after they quit blooming, we always cut that out. We didn't leave them like that. We never let that grow like that.

SMOOT: So do you know exactly how many bushes are right here in this area?

HOBBY: No. There's a whole of them.

SMOOT: It's really hard to tell, since they haven't been well kept.

HOBBY: Hmm-mm, and they're not cut back either like we shaped them. We kept this all shaped-up. There's the spring under there, the cistern. [unintelligible] Let's see, here's the rosebush. Look at it. You would never believe it. This is it. [unintelligible] clear up on the spring part there. But just look at it now. It's about choked-out. [chuckling] But that's the Mother Wallace's rosebush, and it bloomed every year. There are some segments of this grapevine. It was trained. It went up, too. But as I say, it seems like everything is all over. Now, see, they put air conditioning in that

dining area. There never was air conditioning in there. There used to be one in the library but not in there.

[SHAVER: The remainder of the first side of the second cassette is contained on the next reel.]

[End #4078; Begin #4079]

SHAVER: This is a copy of the remaining first side of the second cassette of an oral history interview between Pam Smoot, seasonal historian with the regional office of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska, and Reverend Edward Hobby, a longtime employee of the Truman family in Independence, Missouri. The interview was conducted on July 2, 1985, at the Truman home. At this point in time, the interview continues in the carriage house.

HOBBY: Well, no, I doubt it, because in later years when Mr. Lockwood started taking care of it, he brought his own tools. And the mower that I used to use might yet be in there. I couldn't say for sure. I declare, that stove is still in there. That was in Mr. Frank's and them house. Yeah, there's some tools in here. They've got them in here now. But the lawn mower and all is gone. Those rakes and things, I guess that's—

SMOOT: What about these over in the corner?

HOBBY: This was the barrel we put trash in and the trash man would pick up.

SMOOT: Were these some of the tools that you used?

HOBBY: Yeah, that's the whip there we used, and there is a trimmer/edger. Yeah, they're the same. And these clippers, I used them for cutting bushes in a small area. And that shovel is still there, and the saw. Yeah, I see a lot of the old tools right back there. All that was the tools originally. There is the saw that I used to cut out the trees hanging up there. This is all new stuff. I guess the people here . . . That air conditioning unit is still here, I see. That was here. That came out of the house next to Mrs. Wallace. That was when Mr. Frank . . . Here, here's our lawn mower. There's my leaf catcher, and

the water sprinkler, and the wheelbarrow. Yeah, all of the tools are about the same.

SMOOT: This looks like a very old lawn mower here. Did it get the job done?

HOBBY: Oh, yeah, it did all right. It didn't have a catcher, a bag on it like now, but it did all right.

SMOOT: Does anything else in here look familiar to you?

HOBBY: Yeah, everything is about the same. Those boxes when they started putting in the security system, they're all here. Actually, everything is . . . They finally opened this box [unintelligible] used to be some stuff. I think they took that out after Mrs. Truman died and carried it to the library. [unintelligible]

SMOOT: So this box here was used to store some type of materials?

HOBBY: No, it was stuff that shipped probably to them, and they never did get around to opening it. That's another one of those sprinkle deals. Mr. Truman and them never did use it. Someone gave it to them for a gift, but they never did use it. They had another one around here somewhere. There's one right there. There's two of them.

SMOOT: Did they often receive gifts that they never opened?

HOBBY: Well, the smaller things they got, of course, I think in years back, big things when they were shipped back from the White House, some of them they never did probably get around to opening up. I kept all this swept out and cleaned up. That old mattress is still there. That's unbelievable. [chuckling]

SMOOT: Unbelievable?

HOBBY: That was a mattress that was in one of the twin beds in the guest room. Mrs. Truman bought a new mattress, and I thought they had disposed or gotten rid of that, but it's still there, I see.

SMOOT: So it's been there for quite some time.

HOBBY: These are the storm screens that I used to put up. And those storm windows, I notice

they are painting them now. There's some more of the screens. I used to put them in and out every spring and take them down in the fall.

SMOOT: Where did those storm windows go? Where did you put the screens?

HOBBY: They went around in the house there. Some of them went in—

SMOOT: In the house?

HOBBY: Yes, in different rooms.

SMOOT: Okay, so you put them on the windows?

HOBBY: Yeah, the bedrooms and the little short room, the windows that went in the pantry, and those straight back there, they went on the storm doors. All those are for the storms, straight back. Of course, the screen doors, after they got new combination ones, they didn't use that screen anymore. They used the ones with the combination that had the storm glass and screen both, you'd take the glass . . . So that's where those screens go back there, went in the doors.

SMOOT: What do you mean when you say *a combination*?

HOBBY: Just like you see that door there with the glass in it, well, you take that out and put a screen in it for the summer. That's what you do for summerizing. But now they've got the aluminum ones, where all you do is slide the glass up and the screen is in place. But originally that's what you used, was like that. They didn't have the combination. See, that storm . . . the glass still in that door there come out?

SMOOT: Yes.

HOBBY: Well, one of those screens right there goes on that door. [unintelligible]

SMOOT: Do you know whose green Chrysler this is right here?

HOBBY: That's Mrs. Truman's car. That was her car. Well, originally her car was similar to this. I think what happened, one year after Mr. Truman died, I think Margaret took Mrs. Truman's car and carried it back to New York. And this was the car that Mr.

Truman always used, and he had a Secret Service man to drive him. And then in later years, Mrs. Truman drove it. When Margaret would come home, she drove it herself.

She didn't have no Secret Service man to go around with, she just drove it herself. Of course, it had the system in it, you know, that if anything goes wrong, they could detect it because she had the . . . What is the system in there? It seems like they let the battery run down. They're charging the battery now, I see.

SMOOT: Was there something back here called a pergola?

HOBBY: Pergola? I don't know what that would be, unless it was [unintelligible] in little arch there. Pergola? No, I don't remember anything about that. Miss May could probably tell you what the pergola was. When I came here there wasn't nothing. There used to be some more . . . Oh, all those rose of Sharon right along in there have died out.

SMOOT: Where were they? Outside the brick area?

HOBBY: Yes, outside the brick area.

SMOOT: Just growing around there?

HOBBY: Uh-huh. They're dead now. Some of those are dying, too, I notice.

SMOOT: You said that most of the shrubbery was not very much taller than you?

HOBBY: No, we didn't get it to run way up like this now.

SMOOT: Even those ones alongside the gate, along the alleyway? Were those always that tall?

HOBBY: No, those were about a little higher than the fence.

SMOOT: A little higher than what?

HOBBY: Than the fence. They didn't let them get way up like that.

SMOOT: My goodness, they better hurry up and have someone take care of this. Otherwise it's going to look like a forest.

HOBBY: It sure has grown. It's just unbelievable. Well, when Mr. Lockwood was here, he did

the mowing of the grass, but I still did the trimming of the shrubbery, all that. He just mowed the yard. I did that up until I left.

SMOOT: So how long did you stay after Mrs. Truman passed away? How much longer did you stay after that?

HOBBY: Oh, I didn't come down here but, oh, two or three times after her passing. We just kind of got things together and in place till Miss Margaret and the government, the people come out here and took over. They had security people, so I didn't have any need to come. [chuckling] I'd say about three weeks after her passing and burial. That was the end of my coming to work.

[Editorial note: Pam Smoot provided the directional notes in the portion of the interview that takes place inside the house. Her draft of the outside portion was incomplete and therefore less helpful in providing directions and filling gaps.]

END OF INTERVIEW

## APPENDIX

1. "Broken Branches," *Kansas City Star*, January 4, 1973.
2. "Handyman cherishes Truman memories," *The Examiner*, October 21, 1982, p. 16.
3. Trudy Johnson photograph of Edward Hobby and Valeria LaMere in the dining room of the Truman home, December 1980, HSTR photograph collection.
4. Trudy Johnson photograph of Edward Hobby at kitchen door leading to the back staircase, December 1980, HSTR photograph collection.